

beside which they have grown up. At the second place where we crossed it the Kuruk-darja was full of prostrate *kötäk*, much of it half buried in the ground; very likely this was ancient drift-wood. Here there was also a more extensive area of moist dust, seemingly the bottom of a former lake. Its moist condition, like that of the river, is due to its proximity to the mountains; for no doubt rain-water still collects sometimes in these old depressions.

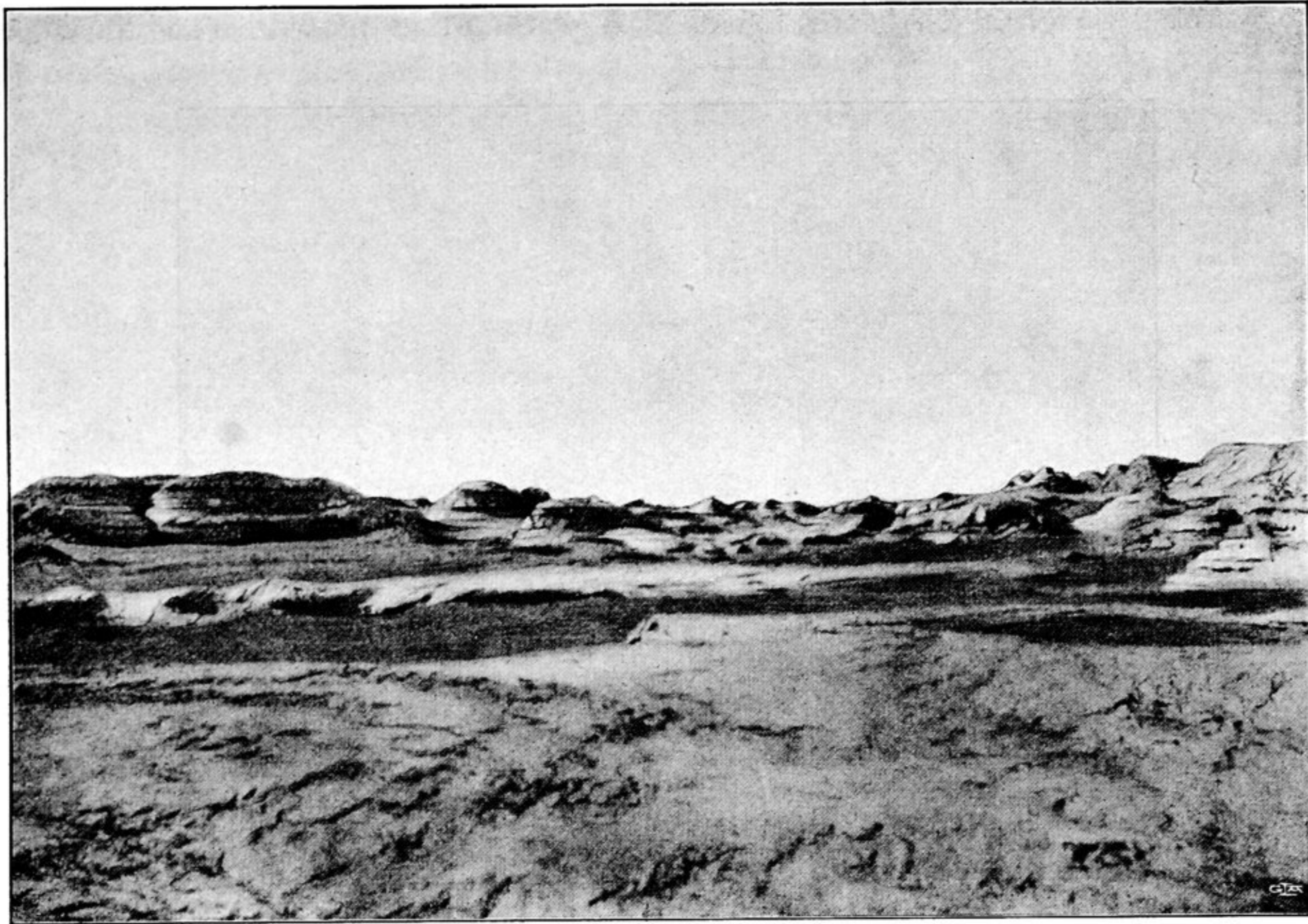


Fig. 45. A LABYRINTH OF CLAY-TERRACES.

After that our path ran for some distance through a labyrinth of clay terraces and ridges, where no distinct river-bed could be traced. Possibly these several terraces mark the successive shore-lines of a lake that dried up step by step and left them behind. They appeared to extend southwards right away to the horizon, the country being in that direction everywhere perfectly level, except for an occasional low detached dune. After that we had the river-bed on our left, its course being indicated by a line of upright *kötäk*. Beyond it were the rounded heights of the Kuruk-tagh, though they nowhere exhibited such imposing dimensions as at Budschentü-bulak. Farther on we crossed the Kuruk-darja several times, its bed being very distinctly marked and its loops in point of form strikingly reminiscent of the present lower Tarim. *Kötäk* was often extraordinarily plentiful, mostly in the form of old poplars of considerable size lying on the ground, though these never grew to such a considerable size as the living poplars we had seen; their circumference generally measured up to 1 m. The trees still standing upright always have thin and slender